



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE TREE OF LIFE.

MESSRS. EDITORS:—Among the presents sent this government from Japan, is a beautiful Casket, which for some time past has been an object of admiration in one of the reception rooms of the President's House at Washington. The principal interest of the object lies in a symbolic work of Art, wrought upon it in very low relief; painted, and here and there delicately touched with gold.

Observers have been much puzzled about the design of this work, since, unlike many of the fantastic decorations of objects from that part of the world, it seems to be the production of thought, and to have a secret significance.

The author of the article below, thinks he has discovered the interpretation of the design, and to give greater effect to his ideas, has put them into the mouth of the Spirit of the Casket, which is supposed to address the curious crowd of its American beholders.

According to the author, the comprehensive idea of the work appears to be the *Tree of Life*, which, with a few other natural signs, is made to symbolize the redemption of the world from chaos; the sustenance of organic life as its material purpose, its inseparable relations with the universe, and that it is committed to the care and occupation of intelligent life. There is no living being in the picture, but one is ready to see Adam walk into the garden, and finding the signs of his business there, take up the implements lying at the root of the tree, and begin his horticultural labors, conscious that he will be directed in them by the informing spirit, recognized in its symbol—a golden star resting on the earth near the gardening tools—which signifies cultivation.

It is remarkable that below the star appears a small figure of the shepherd's crook, which may intimate the ultimate redemption of the world from spiritual chaos.

The author, who commits his MS. to me, seems to have worked out his idea with pains and skill. Perhaps his mystical vein may repel the reader who is impatient of effort; but that is a form of offense which Art of every kind receives from the indolent attention of the world. To those who know how much true civilization owes to the East, and what an interpretation Christianity itself receives from an orientalised imagination, we can safely commend the following prose-poem as worthy a careful and genial perusal. The purity of the writer's heart, and the genuineness and constancy of his affection for Art, we can cordially bear witness to.

H. W. BELLOWES.

New York, Feb. 19, 1855.

In caves and airy spaces free:
In Bards' and Prophets' souls I dwell:
And to processions of the ages tell
All that my heedful sense receives.
Through me the grand old ideals live,
That, to the present, affluence give:
So fable tells—so man believes.
Thus wondrous voices ever flow,
From out the past, in accents low,
Along Time's all-transferring wave.
So all that hath been, shall for aye,
The thoughts and deeds of mortals sway;
The wise instruct—inspire the brave.

Must I interpret the symbolic story that Art has so grandly wrought upon this casket from the far Orient, on the verge of the antique world? This mythic truth which reads itself so clearly to those children near the cradle of mankind.

And to have credence in the interpretation, should my title of verity be given?

Men call me Echo, and have given me, confusedly, the names of various elemental voices; and variously of all the Muses. Some, more wisely imagine me to be Mnemosyne—the parent of them all. Others deem me the spirit of celestial Hope, and some, with light consideration, have named me Phantasy. But of little moment are these name-givings all.

I will declare myself. I am instructive Inspiration! Memory and Hope justly claim me as their guardian and inspirer, while

They raise for man their archway over time,
And light him on, as he to Heaven doth climb.

The Bards, also, and Artists, are my especial care; and the combined ministry of them both, you see in the simple, yet wondrous work, wrought upon the casket. This Tree of Life—this sublime type of the universe of matter and spirit; of its laws and uses. In this, also, you discern the source whence their endowments proceed: their large apprehension of truth; and how beneficently, with hallowed light, they have cleared the dark pathway of humanity.

But let not our regards wander from the casket and its Tree of Life.

Can it be thought incredible, that in the far Orient, where men are yet children, the sacred Bards should know of the marvellous myths, and significant nursery tales of man high in the north, where maelstroms roar, and snows eternal hood the mountain heads—should know of the tree, the holy ash Ysdragill that grew up from chaos, when light dawned upon the world—how its roots penetrated through all oceans, and its stem and branches arose and filled all the universe; and how, sheltered by the beneficent tree, the heroes and good spirits assailed and overcame the giants and all the dark powers of the abyss. But, it will cease to be incredible, when it is remembered that the Bards and Heroes of the north, wandered back to the nursery-garden of the world in the East, to bring the germs to make their fields grow green.

I much fear that all ye peoples of the Occident forget the eastern fount of light which germinates your life—that you are wont to spurn away the ladder upon which you clomb, and cannot now recall the song of the sacred Seer of Patmos, and the holy Tree of Life in the midst, filing the heavenly spaces, and bending with fruits for the healing of the nations.

And it seemeth you remember not the voice that came to the Hero-Bard of the Creation, saying, man was placed beneath the Tree of Life—was placed in the garden to keep and dress it. But, since it is recalled by the suggestive Art-language written all over and through the casket, you will recognize in the simple implements of the gardener, which the artists have chosen to place at the root of the tree, expressive symbols of the Divine command, "Keep and dress it." And, while reading the uses of the earth, thus expressed, you will know that the golden star—with the shepherd's crook beside it, which they have also placed on the earth, near the signs of culture, symbolizes the heavenly light given to men to guide them, not only to keep and dress the garden of earth, but the tree of life within them. But ye who have been recipients of the blessed radiance of the star in the East, in so full measure, can mistake not the sign.

You will, also, discern in the passage of the branches of the trees, above and beyond the region of clouds, an intimation of the attraction of all growths to their heavenly source.

Roots attach to earth for material nourishment. Branches strive aloft—as the spirit in aspiration—to bear the bloom and fruit in upper air.

You know the interpretation to be just. Other signs of truth may change. These, never. The sign, and what is symbolized, are universal; and you have in them an

impressive illustration of the high uses of the labors of the artists; and not of less interest and significance in view of the history and occasion of the presentation and reception of the casket, bearing the Art-written theme, than in regard to the power of Art, with few natural signs, to communicate ideas and all beautiful inculcations, with clearness and boundless suggestiveness, to men of all tongues, and nations, and ages.

The tongue of the elements hath borne to the listening sense of all the world the history and occasion; yet not with the moral. With national authority and show of forceful persuasion, you send your searriors over all oceans to the remote benighted country for the enlargement of your material possessions—for the gathering of the shining flakes to be found in the earth where the roots of the tree penetrate; and lo! through the beautiful ministry of the artists, what is the response? You receive at the paternal dome of your nation, from that of the far-country, in the form of a casket, a sublime lesson of peaceful and obedient life. Thus do the bards and artists live and labor to give to the nations and ages utterance to all they would express, from the depths of their life. Would you know the creed I have given them as the guiding thought of their devoted labors, and that with fervent faith they ever obey?

Read, then, the

ARTISTS' CREED OF THE AGES.

The infinite Creative Spirit ruleth unseen and alone; yet his powers are various, and various their manifestations.

In his creations, which are called Nature and Life, Matter and Motion, Form and Spirit, we recognize his Thought and his Power, his Wisdom and Goodness; these are their utterances. Thus embodied, actuated, inspired, they accomplish a purpose, and live and act in infinite progression.

We in like manner have thoughts and powers, affections and purposes; and with emulous aspirations, yet humility of faculties derived, strive to make them manifest, so that they may not be futile and dead. Imitating the Celestial mind, we resolve them to Form, to action and utterance; and thus preserve and impart to fururity the divine thought, the ideal image, the beneficent affection.

Vocal utterance melts into air, and the idea dies with the sound. Therefore we invent material representatives of speech, and thus preserve a universe of thought in a written tablet. Perfect silence and immateriality are inconceivable. The infinite mind could not exist in such a nullity! Hence he creates and endows worlds with myriad forms of power and beauty, intelligence and life. Great things are the sign of his spirit! Even so with man, when, with reverent emotions, he worthily striveth. Hence to the deities we liken the hero; and at last stands his statue with theirs in the pantheon.

All that is noble, and all that is beautiful in man and the world, we seize and eternalize as well as we may.

The peoples who cherish not Art, as the winds, pass away.

The artist's creed is ended. You see therein the motive and law of their labors. While we can keep alive in the world, that spirit of childhood which is ever fresh in

the hearts of these torch-bearers of the race, with its sense unsealed to the deep and holy teachings of the universe, with its truth, and love, and faith, there is hope for humanity, and joyous inducement to participate in its life. Otherwise there is none.

Acknowledge them as consecrated instructors—illustrators, in their chosen walk, of your individual and national existence—the principles and purposes of your moral and political structure, with its highest ideal of life.

Your national tree has fixed its firm roots in the heart of the continent, and spread its fibrous branches over lakes and rivers, and valleys and mountains, from ocean to ocean. It has hitherto given shelter and shade. The time for bloom and fruit has come. Receive then the proffered husbandry of these cultivators of the Beautiful, so that its flowers and fruits may be beautiful and beneficent, as were the devoted labors of the noble masters of the vineyard, who nourished its tender germ and guarded its expanding form till they bequeathed it, in its strength, a rich inheritance to you.

And now I wing my way to oriental fields—my best and cherished home—since this, my lowly-whispered task, is done—and yet not wholly mine.

Though spirits high, we act not of ourselves;
From higher powers, the promptings all proceed.
We feel an impulse; that from heaven descends.
To action we advance; and as we go
The pathway opens, lighted further on.
Scarcely the motive of preceding act
Can we remember, for we live and move
The passive agents of the power above.

HORATIO STONE.

The Poetry of Architecture; or the Architecture of the Nations of Europe, considered in its Association with Natural Scenery and National Character. By JOHN RUSKIN.

NO. II. THE COTTAGE.—CONTINUED.

3. THE MOUNTAIN COTTAGE.—SWITZERLAND.

In the three instances of the lowland cottage which have been already considered, are included the chief peculiarities of style which are interesting or important. I have not, it is true, spoken of the carved oaken gable and shadowy roof of the Norman villa; of the black crossed rafters and fantastic projections which delight the eyes of the German; nor of the Moorish arches and confused galleries which mingle so magnificently with the inimitable fretwork of the grey temples of the Spaniard. But these are not peculiarities solely belonging to the cottage; they are found in buildings of a higher order, and seldom, unless where they are combined with other features. They are therefore rather to be considered, in future, as elements of strict effect, than, now, as the peculiarities of independent buildings. My remarks on the Italian cottage might, indeed, be applied, were it not for the constant presence of Moorish feeling, to that of Spain. The architecture of the two nations is intimately connected; modified, in Italy, by the taste of the Roman; and, in Spain, by the fanciful creations of the Moor. When I am considering the fortress and the palace, I shall be compelled to devote a very large share of my attention to Spain; but, for characteristic examples of the cottage, I turn rather to Switzerland and England.

Preparatory, therefore, to a few general remarks on modern ornamental cottages, it will be instructive to observe the peculiarities of two varieties of the mountain cottage, diametrically opposite to each other in most of their features; one always beautiful, and the other frequently so.

First, for Helvetia. Well do I remember the thrilling and exquisite moment when first in my life (which had not been over long), I encountered, in a calm and shadowy dingle, darkened with the thick spreading of tall pines, and voiceful with the singing of a rock-encumbered stream, and passing up towards the flank of a smooth, green mountain, whose swarded summit shone in the summer snow like an emerald set in silver—when, I say, I first encountered in this calm defile of the Jura, the unobtrusive, yet beautiful front of the Swiss cottage, I thought it the loveliest piece of architecture I had ever had the felicity of contemplating; yet it was nothing in itself, nothing but a few mossy fir trunks loosely nailed together, with one or two grey stones on the roof; but its power was the power of association; its beauty, that of fitness and humility. How different is this from what modern architects erect, when they attempt to produce what is, by courtesy, called a Swiss cottage. The modern building known in Britain by that name, has very long chimneys, covered with various exceedingly ingenious devices, for the convenient reception and hospitable entertainment of soot, supposed by the innocent and deluded proprietor to be "meant for ornament." Its gable roof slopes at an acute angle, and terminates in an interesting and romantic manner, at each extremity, in a tooth-pick. Its walls are very precisely and prettily plastered; and it is rendered quite complete by the addition of two neat, little bow-windows, supported on neat little mahogany brackets, full of neat little squares of red and yellow glass. Its door is approached under a neat little veranda, "uncommon green," and is flanked on each side by a neat little round table, with all its legs of different lengths, and by a variety of neat little wooden chairs, all very peculiarly uncomfortable, and amazingly full of carvings: the whole being surrounded by a garden full of flints, burnt bricks, and cinders, with some water in the middle, and a fountain in the middle of it, which won't play; accompanied by some gold-fish, which won't swim; and by two or three ducks which will splash. Now, I am excessively sorry to inform the members of any respectable English family, who are making themselves uncomfortable in one of these ingenious conceptions, under the idea that they are living in a Swiss cottage, that they labor under a melancholy deception; and shall now proceed to investigate the peculiarities of the real building. The life of a Swiss peasant is divided into two periods; that in which he is watching his cattle at their summer pasture on the high Alps, and that in which he seeks shelter from the violence of the winter storms, in the most retired parts of the low valleys. During the first period, he requires only occasional shelter from storms of excessive violence; during the latter, a sufficient protection from continued inclement weather. The Alpine, or summer cottage, therefore, is a rude log hut, formed of unsquared pine trunks, notched into each

other at the corners. The roof, being excessively flat, so as to offer no surface to the wind, is covered with fragments of any stone that will split easily, held on by crossing logs; which are, in their turn, kept down by masses of stone; the whole being generally sheltered behind some projecting rock, or resting against the slope of the mountain, so that, from one side, you may step upon the roof. This is the *chalet*. When well grouped, running along a slope of mountain side, these huts produce a very pleasing effect, being never obtrusive (owing to the prevailing greyness of their tone), uniting well with surrounding objects, and bestowing at once animation and character. But the winter residence, the Swiss cottage, properly called, is a much more elaborate piece of workmanship.

The principal requisite is, of course, strength; and this is always observable in the large size of the timbers, and the ingenious manner in which they are joined, so as to support and relieve each other, when any of them are severely tried. The roof is always very flat, generally meeting at an angle of 155 deg., and projecting from five feet to seven feet over the cottage side, in order to prevent the windows from being thoroughly clogged up with snow. That this projection may not be crushed down by the enormous weight of snow which it must sometimes sustain, it is assisted by strong wooden supports, which sometimes extend half down the walls for the sake of strength, divide the side into regular compartments, and are rendered ornamental by grotesque carving. Every canton has its own window. That of Uri, with its diamond wood-work at the bottom, is, perhaps, one of the richest. The galleries are generally rendered ornamental by a great deal of labor bestowed on their wood-work. This is best executed in the canton of Berne. The door is always six or seven feet from the ground, and occasionally much more, that it may be accessible in snow; and it is reached by an oblique gallery, leading up to a horizontal one. The base of the cottage is formed of stone, generally white-washed. The chimneys must have a chapter to themselves; they are splendid examples of utility combined with ornament. Such are the chief characteristics of the Swiss cottage, separately considered. I must now take notice of its effect in scenery.

When one has been wandering for a whole morning through a valley of perfect silence, where everything around, which is motionless, is colossal, and everything which has motion resistless; where the strength and the glory of nature are principally developed in the very forces which feed upon her majesty; and where, in the midst of mightiness which seems imperishable, all that is indeed eternal is the influence of desolation; one is apt to be surprised, and by no means agreeably, to find, crouched behind some projecting rock, a piece of architecture which is neat in the extreme, though in the midst of wildness, weak in the midst of strength, contemptible in the midst of immensity. There is something offensive in its neatness, for the wood is almost always perfectly clean, and looks as if it had been just cut; it is consequently raw in its color and destitute of all variety of tone. This is especially disagreeable when the eye has been previously accustomed to, and finds, everywhere around,